Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 23, 2008
Town Hall 7:00pm

Chairman Larry Wahl called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

Present: Chairman Wahl (LW), members Russ Cooke (RC), Selectmen's Rep Jack O'Reilly (JO), Daren Sabine (DS), Tom Benson (TB), Gail Pare (GP), Gail Klanchesser (GK), School Board Rep Helen Maldini (HM), Rick Stern (RS), John Lamson (JL); Administrative Assistant Beatrice Marconi, Fire Engineers Wib Goin, Ruth Fletcher and Steve Sabine; Fire Chief Roy Greenleaf and Fire Department Secretary Sarah McQuade.

GK moved to approve the minutes of January 16. GP seconded with the motion passing with Jack O'Reilly abstaining. GK mentioned that the AA was asked to research the dues question that came up last meeting regarding where it was charged to. Beatrice Marconi answered that although paid, in error it was charged to emergency management but would be corrected.

GP moved to tentatively accept the Fire Department budget of $ 1,138,518. HM seconded.

LW gave a brief summary of events regarding the over spending of the 2007 FD budget. The Board of Selectmen had authorized up to $ 12,000 to cover the overage and as of last week, they were overspent by $ 5,744.

The Fire Dept worksheet given last week in the packets shows an erroneous figure under the 'last year actual' column. Because of payroll adjustments, that number is high by $22,978. This will be written ahead for an '08 payroll charge once the auditors do their process in July.

Chairman LW stated that since 2002, the FD budget increased 91.72%. GP asked if new fire fighters were added since then. None, answered LW. The 2.4% C.O.L.A. was discussed with generally the Chief and Assistant Chief getting a merit increase annually from the Engineers because they are salary and do not get overtime. Four individuals are due to get step increases this year. JO spoke of the town wide longevity plan that activates after 10 years of service and caps out at $2,000. The Fire Fighters work a 42 hr work week.

Chairman LW stated that the over time request of $95,000 was extremely high. Due to a termination of an employee, also an individual going out on disability, in addition to a person using his time because of a birth, $36,000 was spent just to cover these 'out of the norm' events. Universally, overtime estimates are just your best guess and unforeseen storms, sicknesses, etc, all add to it being driven upward. Wib reminded the members of the change in leave policy last year.

Chairman LW stated that perhaps call backs may be causing the problem. The Chief explained that when they are dispatched to the Portsmouth Hospital, no one is called back, however for Dover, Rochester etc, yes, people are called in to cover the station. 2 hours minimum must be paid. DS spoke of the changes from Rockingham coming down the pike regarding toning in because they get so busy. Finding and keeping eligible call in people is tough.

RC asked if the buy out issue from last year was resolved. LW explained the definition of a work day to the FD was 24 hours. A day to most everyone else was 8 hours. A 240 hr cap on carry over time is now clear. No sick time can be carried over, however unused sick leave can be bought back by the town.
Retirement is at $15.92% for the town contribution for the fire department.

Training – GK stated that the back up sheets submitted by the FD said that training was curtailed because of the '07 budget constraints, yet that line is over. Sarah McQuade answered by saying they tried to get out of a satellite contract they were in but couldn't. That was $ 2,500 per year. Three people were sent to Ship Board training last year. 2 are planned for this year. 2 are planned for the next. Uniforms – Incidental needs like for call people for a polo or matching tee.

Physicals – JL asked if they were getting physicals less frequently. LW stated that physicals are not mandated annually. Only Haz Mat. No one else (area fire departments) is having annual physicals. GP felt we shouldn't be so tight with the physicals budget as they are important. LW disagreed by stating it is time to watch and cut.

SCBA were waiting for stickers before we purchase. (see below for further SCBA discussion)

Vehicle Fuel – Chr LW stated that sending the ladder out constantly is running it to the ground and may not be the most cost effective way of addressing boxes.

Alarm Maintenance asked for $5,500 this year. The extra was for hydraulic tools for safety measures as requested by the Alarm Maintenance person. LW stated that this was a happy wish list and that for 2 to 3 poles a year, the request was not justifiable.

JO stated that the Selectmen cut $ 7,023 from the original FD budget request at their level which covered salaries and benefits affiliated with the soon to be hired assistant chief which represented January expenses budgeted for.

Salaries and benefits were discussed and compared to 2002 costs vs. 2008 budget requested costs.

Gail Pare was asked if she would like to amend her original motion but stated for a $1,500 difference, she felt the original number was fine.

JL moved to amend GP's motion to tentatively recommend the FD budget of $1,138,518 to now reflect $1,137,018. JO seconded. Motion to amend passed with GP voting against and DS abstaining.

Motion to tentatively recommend a FD budget of $ 1,137,018 passed with DS abstaining.

Capital Reserves request by FD – as recommended by Selectmen
$ 25,000 for vehicle maintenance
$30,000 SCBA
$10,000 Ambulance (whereas the FD had requested $ 15,000)

- *SCBA Warrant Article may end up being eliminated by BOS as Selectman O'Reilly will propose the Board to fund in Cap. Outlay rather than Cap. Reserve since it may be spent this year.*

Selectman Rep O'Reilly moved to adjourn at 9:05pm GP seconded. Motion passed.

Respectively submitted,

Beatrice Marconi
Admin Assist
Newington